

Let The Search Begin!



Okay—you've self-assessed, explored, researched, job shadowed, volunteered, educated, trained, and graduated. Now you're ready to tackle getting the job.

Your first job will be to look for a job. Expect this to take some time, 40 to 45 hours a week if you are not currently working, 20 hours a week if you are already working. Here is where you market yourself, your skills, and your knowledge to land the job you really want.

Remember, this is just one step in good career planning. It isn't something you'll do just once in your life. As you grow and change, your career goals will grow and change. You should plan to go through the career planning cycle many times throughout your working lifetime.

Job Search Strategies—Prepare your resume and practice interviewing. Market yourself and your skills to land the job you want.



Know Yourself—examine your strengths and weaknesses, likes and dislikes, talents and goals.

Explore Careers—compare what you know about yourself to real occupations. Narrow down your choices.

*Repeat as necessary.

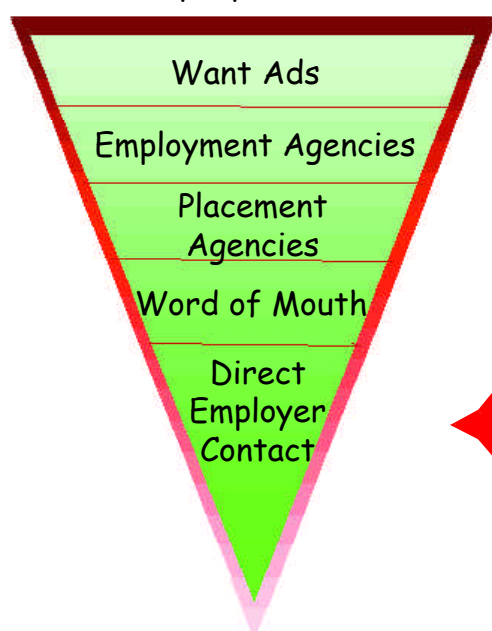


"I'm sorry ... the position has already been filled."

You've been scouring the want ads, sending resumes by e-mail and snail mail and you're about ready to try dog sled—but you haven't been able to land a single interview in your chosen field. Was it a mistake to study what you did? Are all your plans and dreams about to vanish with a lack of work? Not at all. You just need to tap into the "hidden" job market.

Learning To Use The "Hidden" Job Market

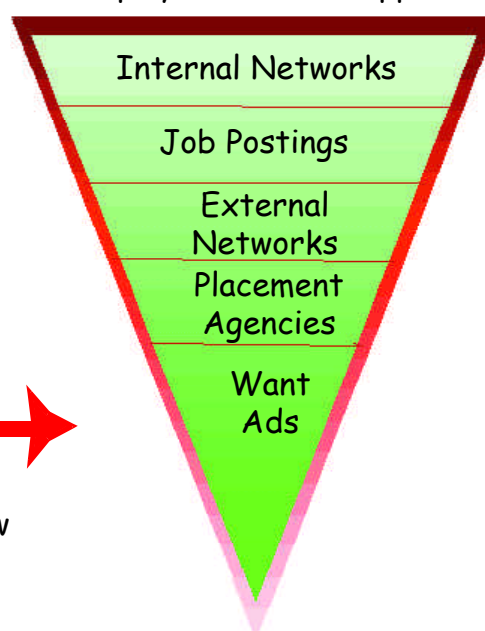
How most people look for work



The Problem

Most job seekers spend their time checking and responding to want ads, yet employers hire the least number of people through want ads.

How employers look for applicants



Compare how employers look for applicants with how most people look for work.

The Solution

Identify companies you want to work for, try to get informational interviews, ask for a job, leave a resume, fill out an application, check back periodically. Show enthusiasm, but do not be a pest.

Career Portfolios

A *portfolio* is a documented collection of skills, values, courses, experience, accomplishments, and talents. It is a file of resources that can be used to visually support your verbal presentation to an employer in an interview. It has never been more necessary to market your assets to an employer, and a portfolio is an effective way to "showcase" your abilities. It is also something that is active and alive. Keep building your portfolio, constantly adding new things and adjusting the content.

In specific career areas, such as graphic arts, photography, modeling, architecture, portfolios have been used for decades. The content for this portfolio, however, is different. A traditional portfolio has samples of work only, and is designed to demonstrate technical proficiency or mastery level in a given field. The career portfolio has a broader scope, containing evidence of employability skills in the areas of academic, work experience, achievements, technical ability, goal setting, and so on.

A well-planned portfolio can set you apart, whether you are headed to your first interview or a seasoned professional. Before you rush out and buy the most expensive leather case, however, it would be wise to put some thought into planning and organizing the contents.

Creating a portfolio really is an exercise in marketing. It involves the same steps as marketing any product, except this time the product is YOU. What goes into a portfolio? Here's a list of some good items.

- Career Summary and Goals
- Skills and Abilities Summary
- References
- Letters of Recommendation and Testimonials
- Extra Resumes--both traditional and scannable versions
- Transcripts
- Work Samples
- Certifications, Degrees, Licenses
- Business cards
- Awards and Honors
- Military Records and Awards

Here's a few tips for organizing and using your portfolio.

- During the interview direct the employer to pieces that will meet specific needs.
- Group into separate sections.
- Before each interview, check your case to replace samples.
- Keep backup copies of materials.
- Market your personal style--create, arrange and organize contents to demonstrate skills.
- The worst portfolios have lots of individual pieces that fall out. The best ones are quite simple.
- Include duplicates that may be left for further review.
- Use acetate page protectors.
- Start with best piece, then order chronologically, by groups, or series. End with a good piece.

It's A Cover Up!

Your first chance to impress an employer is with an outstanding cover letter.

First impressions are very important. Your best chance of making a good first impression with an employer is with a great cover letter. When possible, address your cover letter to a specific person. Tailor the letter to the recipient--be creative and original. The cover letter is key to getting your resume read, whether you are sending it electronically or on paper. Say something that will interest the reader enough to go on and review your resume.

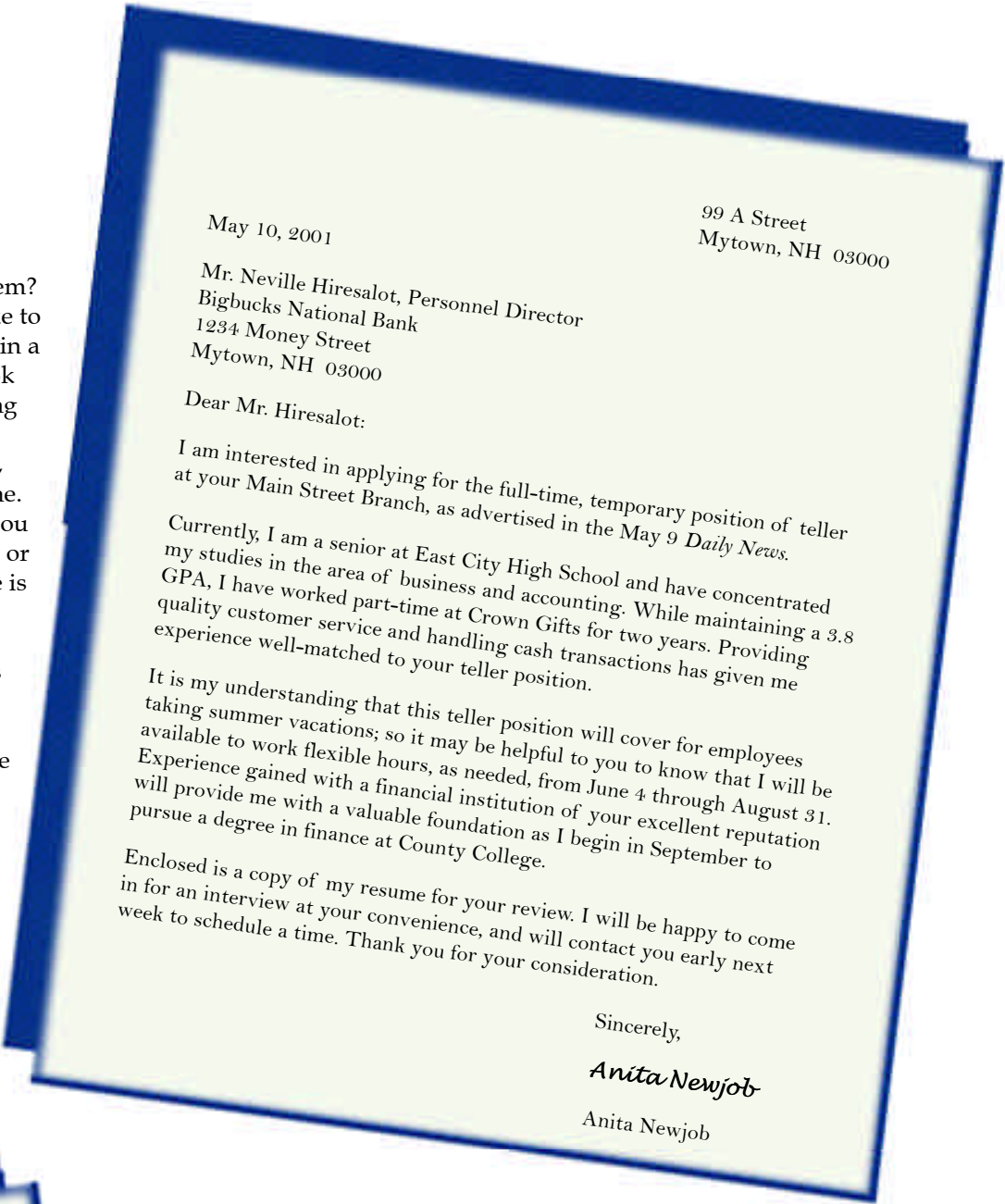
Cover letters should be no more than three or four fairly brief paragraphs. In the first paragraph, tell the reader why you are writing. Did you see an ad in the paper or on-line? Did you hear about an opening from someone? Be specific!

Next, in one or two paragraphs, give a brief review of your most relevant qualifications and how they match the job description. Give a reason why the company should hire

you. What can you do for them? Tell the reader why you'd like to work for their company. Put in a comment that shows you took the time to find out something about their business.

In the closing paragraph, thank the reader for their time. You might want to say that you look forward to meeting him or her, or note that your resume is enclosed. Add that you will follow up by phone within a specified time frame, such as "early next week."

As with any business document, make sure that the letter is neat, and that spelling, grammar, and punctuation are correct. If you are sending the letter on paper, use the same kind of paper as your resume, and always use an original signature in ink.



The Resume

The right resume can make a big difference

A well-written, neat, and to-the-point resume is important when you are trying to get the attention of someone in the position of hiring you. You've probably seen lots of recommendations on how to write a resume. But most of them come down to a few simple basics:

- ✓ Summarize your education, skills, and work experience.
- ✓ Use short paragraphs.
- ✓ Limit to one page if possible.
- ✓ Check and double-check grammar, spelling, and punctuation.

How you organize your resume will depend on how you want to emphasize your education, skills, and work experience. There are three common formats.

Chronological: this style emphasizes your work history. Generally, follow this pattern.

Heading--your name, address,

telephone number, and e-mail.

Objective--a brief statement of your career goal.

Work History--arranged by date with the most recent first. Give the details of company, job title, and short job description that emphasizes skills.

Education--degrees and relevant course work or certifications.

Optional--professional association memberships, awards, military service, certificates, related activities.

Functional: this style emphasizes your skills, knowledge, and abilities without putting them into a time frame. Use this basic pattern.

Heading--your name, address, telephone number, and e-mail.

Skill Categories--description of function-related terms and accomplishments (what you did.)

Work History--dates, places, and positions.

Education--degrees and related course work or certifications.

Optional--professional association memberships, awards, certificates, military service, related activities.

Combination Resume

Job seekers sending out resumes may want to start a vacation fund instead of buying stamps. An *OfficeTeam* survey reports that nearly half (48 percent) of executives say their firm's preferred way to receive resumes is via e-mail--a huge turnaround from two years ago, when only four percent favored this method.

Combination: this style blends the strengths of the chronological style and the functional style.

Heading--your name, address, telephone number, and e-mail.

Objective-- a brief statement of your career goal.

Skills and Work History--this can be listed as the chronological work history with a description of skills, knowledge, and abilities **OR** as skill categories blended with a work history showing when skills were acquired or upgraded.

Education--degrees and relevant course work or certifications.

Optional--professional association memberships, awards, military service, certificates, or related activities.

In addition to these traditional paper resume styles, you may want to design a resume for transmitting via e-mail, the Internet, or to be scanned.

Electronic resumes are submitted on-line to employers or job banks. There is a wide variety of job banks available on-line, such as America's Job Bank (www.ajb.dni.us).

The electronic resume style can be different from a paper resume style. An electronic resume can be more than one page, since the employer can easily scroll down to get your qualifications and experience. A summary of skills should be included--a list of your skills, abilities, qualifications, and knowledge base. However, you should still use plenty of uncluttered white space. Graphics and animation may liven up a resume, but

Scannable Resume

TAYLOR MADE
333 Computer Road
Smalltown, NH 03004
603-555-3215
taylor_made@myprovider.net

KEYWORD SUMMARY
BS Computer Science, 2000, C++, Visual Basic, Assembly, FORTRAN, HTML, CAD, Oracle, MS Office, IBM 630/670, Windows NT, UNIX, Programmer

EDUCATION
Bachelor of Science, Computer Science, 2000
Cybertech College, Techtown, NH
Minor: Mathematics
GPA: 3.8/4.0

Related Courses: Database Design, Compiler Design, Systems Architecture, Operating Systems, Data Structures, Systems Analysis

COMPUTER SKILLS
Languages: C/C++, Visual Basic, Assembly, FORTRAN, HTML
Software: CAD, Oracle, MS Office
Systems: IBM 630/670, Windows NT, UNIX

EXPERIENCE
Support Desk, Big Technical College, 1998-2000
* Maintained computer systems in computer lab
* Installed applications and performed troubleshooting
* Instructed students on applications and systems

Programmer (Intern), General Technical Company, 1998-1999
* Wrote instructional programs
* Corrected errors in pre-written programs using C++
* Altered existing programs to fit user needs

Data Entry Clerk, ABC Sales, Summer 1997
* Updated inventory and sales data

COMMUNICATIONS SKILLS
Received A grades in technical writing classes

WILLING TO RELOCATE

Andrew A. Ambitious
22 Fast Track Road
Hometown, NH 03002

(603) 555-2100
aaambitious@service.com

PROFILE

Recent MBA graduate with customer relations, sales, and administrative support experience in the financial services and retail industries. Background includes working directly with the public, sales related to customer needs, staff supervision, quality assurance, budgeting, and cost controls. Ability to identify, analyze, and solve problems. Excellent interpersonal, oral, and written communications skills. Computer experience includes Microsoft Office Word, Excel, and Access.

SELECTED SKILLS AND EXPERIENCE

Customer Service

Marketed company services to prospective clients resulting in opening new accounts and sales of products and services related to customer needs. Assured customer satisfaction through maintaining highest standards of products and services. Recognized by management for excellent results.

Management

Interviewed, hired, scheduled, supervised, and evaluated staff of up to fourteen people. Strengthened employee morale resulting in 75% reduction in turnover. Controlled labor costs; maintained inventory based on peak and non-peak hours. Managed cash flow and deposits on daily basis.

Administration

Provided full administrative support to company President and seven senior sales representatives. Assisted sales representatives at trade shows, providing potential clients with information on products and services. Negotiated rates and terms for services, arranged approvals, and invoiced clients. Calculated and processed client orders; compiled and prepared daily reports for management. Updated customer accounts payable.

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

Customer Service Representative, First National Bank, Bigcity NH 1998-present
Promoted from Part-time Teller in three months
Financial Services Representative, General Finance Co., Mytown NH Summer 1998
Temporary position during college summer break
Assistant Manager, Happy Guys Pizza Restaurants, Mytown NH 1996-1998
Part-time and summer employment

EDUCATION

MBA—University of State, Bigcity NH, 2000
BA—Mytown College, Mytown NH, 1998, Business Degree, Dean's List

Functional Resume

they consume disk space and take more time to download. You'll want your resume to download quickly and efficiently. A resume with graphics does not scan easily.

The best format is to use plain text (ASCII) without any other formatting like bolds, italics, tabs, lines, or fancy bullets. That way, the electronic resume transmits easily and may also be scanned.

Scannable resumes may be submitted on-line or on paper. The style is specifically designed to be read by a computer scanner and optical character recognition (OCR) software. Many companies use special software that can locate keywords in a scanned document. Include a "keyword" list at the top of your resume. List ten to fifteen words that highlight your skills and abilities, such as *counselor* or *manager*; and specific terms like *HTML* or *desktop publishing*. If you have any industry-specific skills or knowledge, for example, knowing how to use a particular type of machinery, be sure to list that as well.

The format should be structured with common headings, each on a separate line: name; address; telephone number; fax; e-mail; objective; summary of skills (keyword list); qualifications and accomplishments; experience; work history; positions held; education; and certifications. Use clear, concrete language that describes your experience.

A scannable resume should look very plain. Use plain white paper. Use a font that is *fixed-width*--one which all the letters use the same amount of space, such as Courier. Set the page width to 4 3/4" and save the file as "Text with line breaks," which is a text-only (ASCII) format. This will ensure that no matter how the reader has their computer view set up, they will see the same line breaks as you intend.

If you need to indent a line, use blank spaces. As long as you have used a fixed-width font, the characters will line up properly. If you need bullets, use plus signs (+), asterisks (*), dashes (-), or other symbols on a standard keyboard. Do not use fancy bullets, italics, tabs, underlines, shadows, borders, or graphics.

Conquer Your Interview Fears!

FINALLY! After mailing, e-mailing and faxing countless cover letters and resumes, an employer has called to schedule an interview with you. You jump for joy--maybe all your hard work is going to pay off. But after the initial excitement wears off, and thoughts of landing a new job have passed, reality sets in. You realize you are still nowhere near your ultimate goal: *getting the job*.

Suddenly, fear, anxiety and desperation set in, as you know what's ahead--the **DREADED INTERVIEW!**

This is where many talented job seekers quiver. They might have the skills to do the job, but if they can't get through the interview process, how will the employer ever know? As soon as you know you have an interview, it's time to get down to some serious business. You took the time and effort to put together your cover letter and resume, now take the time to prepare for the interview. As much as you think you're the one for the job, ten others are thinking the same thing. Standing out in the interview is the difference between landing the job, or heading back to the job search doldrums.

If you aren't sure how to prepare for the interview, use these tips to help in your preparation:

RESEARCHING THE COMPANY

Those who want to get a head start in the interview process prepare before they walk into that employers office. With the growth of the Internet, it's hard to find a company without a Web site. Learn as much as you can about what the company does, its products, its standing in the marketplace, its competition, and its future plans. If you're interviewing for a specific department, find out as much as you can about the people and work that goes on within that department. If you're in sales, know what products the company is selling. If you're an administrative assistant, know what kind of office programs the company uses. If you're in construction, what kind of equipment will you be expected to operate. If the company doesn't have a Web site, ask them to send some information about the company's history, background and mission. Most will be happy to do so.

MAKING THE FIRST IMPRESSION

Most job seekers visualize the worst when they enter an interview, and imaginations can run wild wondering what to expect. A common thought is a man sitting in a big leather chair with his back to you or someone glaring at you and smirking as if to say "who let this person in here?"

But the fact is, most interviewers are just as nervous as you. Dress well and act like yourself. When you are introduced, extend a firm handshake,

make eye contact and if you can, try to use the name of the person who is interviewing you in a sentence--

"Thanks for taking the time to meet with me, John" or "It's nice to be able to talk about the opportunities at your company, Ms. Crowley." That small gesture brings a sense of intimacy and shows that you are serious about what's about to take place. Be prepared for small talk, it's a way interviewers like to break the ice and calm their nerves--and don't be surprised if it revolves around the weather, traffic, or finding the company on your trip to the office.

GETTING DOWN TO BUSINESS!

This is the hardest part for most people, because no matter how many interviews you've done, and how prepared you are, each interview is different. However, remember that to get to this point you've submitted a cover letter and resume that impressed them enough to call you for an interview. Know your resume inside and out, because that's where the interviewer will base most of his or her initial questions. Talk about successes you've had at your current or previous positions and how it relates to the position for which you are interviewing. Be prepared to discuss past employment and the good and bad of each job you've had.

THOSE TOUGH INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

After you've covered your previous experiences and work history, the interviewer will likely ask you some open-ended questions to try and find out your work style, career goals and how your personality fits into the company culture. Be prepared for such blunt questions such as "Why do you think you would be a good fit for this position," to more basic questions such as "What kind of work environment or people do you like to work with." They're asking these for a reason--to try and find out not only how you would succeed on the job, but also to find out how you will gel with the rest of the staff.

Be prepared for anything. Legal or illegal, the possibilities are, unfortunately, endless. There are numerous books out there that have examples of those tough interview questions, so if you're struggling to find answers, reading a couple might be a good way to find answers to questions you might never have thought were out there. Another way to prepare for those tough interview questions, is through the next step - the mock interview.



THE MOCK INTERVIEW

People don't really do this, do they? *Absolutely!* By having a family member, friend, or co-worker (which may be difficult if no one knows you're looking for a new job) take you through the interview process, you will gain invaluable experience. Have your mock interviewer go through your resume and ask whatever comes to mind. Have them analyze your resume, and ask why you took this job two years ago, or why you want to leave your current job, what you liked best about your previous boss, etc. If anything, it will help you think--why are you interviewing for this position, and why should this employer hire you? If you don't know, the employer certainly won't!

Have your mock interviewer throw in some tough questions, questions that might not be asked, but that provoke thought. "What is your biggest achievement in your career?" or "Where do you see yourself in five years." Would you have been prepared for that question if an employer asked it? The interview is your chance to sell yourself to the employer--do you have a sales pitch?

FOLLOWING UP

Closing the interview and following up is as equally important as having a good cover letter and resume and succeeding in the interview process. You've taken the time to research the company, you've taken the time to meet with a potential employer, now it's time to follow up with the employer. A thank you letter (see sample next page) or even e-mail can help you stand out amongst a large pool of candidates. Although technology is taking over the business world, sometimes employers like nothing more than a personalized thank you, mailed directly to them. Think about what you would want, a personalized thank you letter or memo-like e-mail? In the note, talk about the positives of your interview, and reintegrate how you think your abilities match the opening. It might seem like a simple step, but this is often the step that separates those who get hired from those who don't. You made it this far, a little more time and effort won't hurt.

Source: <www.getwork.com/archives.html>



So, What Do You Say When The Interviewer Asks, "Do You Have Any Questions?"



Every employer will expect you to ask some questions. Be prepared for a conversation. Employers expect job interviews to be conversations, not question and answer sessions. No matter which job you're applying for, or what kind of company it is, you should consider asking some of the following questions.

QUESTIONS ABOUT THE INTERVIEWER

- What do you like most about working here?
- What advice can you give me about succeeding here?
- What is the most important thing you've learned here?

QUESTIONS ABOUT THE COMPANY

- What is the company's mission statement?
- What do you see happening ten years from now?
- Why is the company successful?

QUESTIONS ABOUT TRAINING

- Do you have a formal training program?
- If so, what does it cover?
- How will I be evaluated during the training?

QUESTIONS ABOUT RESPONSIBILITIES?

- What would be my most important responsibility?
- What would my department be responsible for?
- To whom would I report?

QUESTIONS ABOUT THE Job

- What would I actually do?
- What career paths are available to me?
- What skills would I use?

FINAL QUESTIONS

- Do you have any other questions?
- When can I expect to hear from you?

If you're prepared to ask questions like these, you'll show the employer that you're prepared for the interview. You might want to ask one question from each of the above categories. Remember—a good interview sounds like a conversation, not a Q&A session.

Source: *Texas Career Success, 1998-2000*